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ABSTRACT

This publication discusses how unions work to ensure teacher quality. Section 1, "The Union Role in Assuring Teacher Quality" presents the American Federation of Teachers convention resolution adopted on July 19, 1998. It explains the context of teacher quality; the teacher development continuum and the need for change (preservice preparation, entry-level standards, induction programs and the granting of tenure, and continuing professional development); and the union role in ensuring teacher quality (preservice programs, hiring practices, peer assistance and peer review, and tenure and quality). Section 2, "Questions and Answers," examines the teacher quality issue that the union seeks to address, whose responsibility it is to improve teaching quality, policies or programs to improve teaching, who should provide assistance to new or floundering teachers, the effect of peer review programs, entry-level standards for teachers, and the role of tenure laws in ensuring teacher quality. Section 3, "Background Information," presents a teacher quality manifesto taken from a speech by the president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) at the 1998 convention. Section 4, "Background Reading," offers suggestions on general reading materials and AFT reading materials. (SM)

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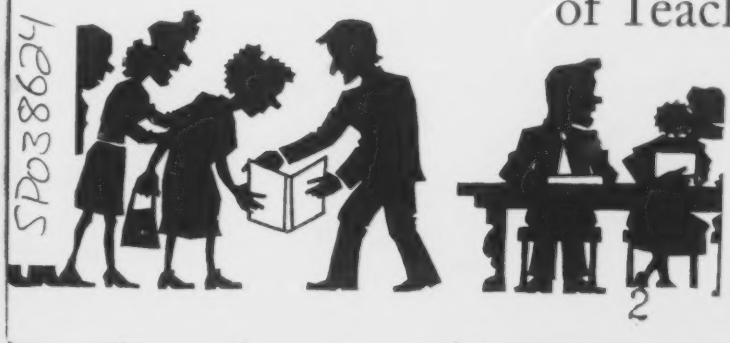
Assuring Teacher Quality: It's Union Work

American Federation of Teachers



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Assuring Teacher Quality: It's Union Work

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I.
The Union Role in Assuring Teacher Quality

AFT Convention Resolution
Adopted July 19, 1998

The Context

The goals of American education are to assure that children of all races, religions, classes and national backgrounds master a demanding core curriculum and other material to prepare them to assume their civic and social responsibilities in a democratic society, to compete in the global economy, and to benefit from postsecondary educational opportunities. Rising expectations about what all students should know and be able to do, breakthroughs in research on how children learn, and the increasing diversity of the student population have expanded the knowledge and skills teachers must have to achieve these ambitious goals.

These new demands on student learning put increasing demands on teacher unions to assist in assuring that all children are taught by qualified, competent and committed teachers. The AFT believes that teacher quality is an essential union responsibility, and so do our members.

The Teacher Development Continuum— A Need for Change

The quality of the teacher workforce is influenced by a number of factors, including, in particular: who is recruited into the teaching profession; the preparation recruits receive; the standards that are set for entry into the profession; the work environment of teachers; and the professional development available to them. A

glance at the current process of teacher education, licensure and continuous professional development reveals a system in flux, generally devoid of high standards and in serious need of improvement.

Preservice Preparation. For the past decade, teacher education has been subject to much scrutiny, and there have been continual calls for reform. Too often, a four-year undergraduate education provides little time to educate prospective teachers deeply in both the discipline that they will teach and the knowledge and skills of the teaching craft that they will need to be successful. Furthermore, changes in student populations, changes in the workplace, new knowledge about how students learn, and the need to educate all students to high levels of achievement have all created a need for systemic changes in teacher preparation.

Entry-Level Standards. In America, each state sets its own standards for teacher preservice preparation and licensure. In most instances, these standards are not very high. Until a decade or so ago, teacher licensure, with the exception of a few southern states, was based almost entirely on "seat diplomas." State departments defined licensure by the number of credits taken by teacher candidates in required subject areas. Although the vast majority of states now require that prospective teachers take an examination to demonstrate content mastery, these examinations are not sufficient to assure a teaching force with deep subject matter knowledge. Often the content assessed is unchallenging, and the standard used to declare that teachers have mastered the content is too low. Yet, in the face of rising student enrollments, even these low-level entry standards are frequently waived by districts frantically seeking to hire staff to fill classrooms.

Induction Programs and the Granting of Tenure. If we look at countries with high-achieving school systems, we find that beginning teachers not only have solid liberal arts backgrounds, deep expertise in their subject areas, and sufficient education in pedagogy, but they also are inducted into the profession through a clinical, real-world training process. Inductees are able to develop and perfect their teaching skills

by relying heavily on the expertise of their more experienced colleagues. As they become more expert, they assume more and more responsibility in the classroom.

By contrast, it is only in recent years, and in a few places, that anything resembling an induction system for new teachers has been put in place in the U.S. Induction is customarily a "sink-or-swim" event for the beginning teacher. New teachers get their teaching assignments—often including classes or students that more experienced teachers are glad to avoid—and they are told, "You're on your own."

Standards for granting tenure should be rigorous. Unfortunately, school districts are generally lax about initial assessments of teachers and often lack meaningful methods of teacher evaluation, as well as the personnel trained to do such evaluations.

Continuing Professional Development. Compared to practices in American business and in other countries, most school districts in the U.S. invest inadequate sums in professional development. Furthermore, the dollars that are spent are generally invested unwisely. They are often spent on one-shot workshops, unconnected to the needs of students and teachers. For professional development to be effective, it must offer meaningful intellectual content; take explicit account of the various contexts of teaching and experiences of teachers; offer support for informed dissent; and be ongoing and embedded in a meaningful way in the day-to-day work of teachers.

The Union Role in Assuring Quality Teaching

To assure a high-quality teaching force, the union must play a role in developing and/or implementing quality preservice teacher education, effective recruiting and hiring practices, strong induction and mentoring programs, high-quality professional development, meaningful evaluation, and, when necessary, fair, timely intervention and dismissal procedures. Many AFT affiliates around the country are doing just that.

Preservice Programs. Teacher unions are taking an active role in working with policy makers and the higher education community to strengthen teacher preparation. They work to ensure quality by advocating, at the state and local levels, for policies and programs in regard to teacher development, licensure and continuing professional development. Teacher preparation must include a firm foundation in subject matter, a clinical, field-based approach to pedagogical knowledge and rigorous assessment of both.

Hiring Practices. Setting high standards for teacher preparation and entry into the profession will be undermined if those standards are abrogated in the face of teacher shortages or ineffective teacher recruitment efforts at the district level. To assure teacher quality, unions must work

> In districts where the conditions are rough and the pay is low—in other words, districts serving our poorest and neediest children, the ones who need the best teachers—schools often end up getting the least-qualified new teachers.
>
> —SANDRA FELDMAN
> *Where We Stand,*
> *August 1998*

with the administration to halt the practice of hiring uncertified staff and of assigning present staff to teach in areas for which they are uncredentialed. Unions around the country—for example, in Los Angeles, New York City, Rochester, N.Y., Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Seattle and Minneapolis—have bargained for rights to participate in the hiring process.

Peer Assistance and Peer Review. In the early 1980s, teacher unions began collective bargaining for peer assistance and/or review programs. These programs address many of the weaknesses in the teacher development continuum identified earlier and speak to teachers' expressed desire that unions play a role in the improvement of teaching. These programs recognize a legitimate role for teachers in establishing and/or enforcing standards in their own profession. Programs to assist beginning or struggling teachers have also been instituted in Toledo, Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio; New York City and Rochester, New York; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Poway, California; the U.S. Virgin Islands and elsewhere.

These programs have much in common. First and foremost, they are all the product of collective bargaining agreements. In addition, they all:

- provide the union with at least an equal voice in the policies, practices and decisions involved in the implementation and evaluation of the program;
- provide assistance and/or review to new teachers and/or tenured teachers who are not performing at acceptable levels;
- have a process for identifying and training qualified teachers to provide peer assistance and/or review;
- have resources dedicated to implementing the program; and
- of particular importance, they all have safeguards to due process, should dismissal or other disciplinary action be necessary.

The programs vary in regard to: who is served; the extent and kinds of services provided; whether peer assistance is confidential; whether peer assistance is manda-

tory; whether mentors evaluate as well as assist teachers; whether it is permissible to use such evidence in subsequent disciplinary procedures; and whether mentors make recommendations regarding termination or continued employment.

The widespread adoption of joint union-administration-directed peer intervention programs to help weak teachers gain the skills they need or, if that is not possible, counsel them into other lines of work, would do a great deal to raise the status of the profession. In addition, it would help reverse the public misperception that the union, and its advocacy of due process and a fair tenure system, works to protect incompetent teachers.

Tenure and Quality. While the public and AFT members agree that the overall quality of the teacher workforce is good, both believe that weak or incompetent teachers threaten the reputation of the profession and the quality of education children receive. Unfortunately, the existence of some failing teachers in our schools—and the exploitation of this situation by the media, some school boards and anti-teacher forces—has given the public the impression that tenure laws inherently protect and perpetuate poor teaching. The AFT believes such a conclusion is erroneous and distracts attention from the real reforms that must be undertaken.

One problem stems from the public's misunderstanding of tenure laws. For the education system to be effective, all teachers need a fair dismissal process—one that protects them from capricious, political and intemperate firing. Tenure laws do not guarantee life-time employment: They neither protect teachers against lay-off due to lack of work, nor prevent firing for incompetence or misconduct. They are designed to protect teachers from arbitrary dismissal without just cause or due process.

Where dismissal proceedings are time consuming, costly and inefficient, they need to be streamlined. In some states and districts, streamlined due-process safeguards have been legislated and/or negotiated to protect both teacher quality and individual rights.

Protecting tenure and assuring high standards of teacher quality are not mutually exclusive sectors of union endeavor. Just as teachers must be defended against unfair, unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious threats to their employment, so, too, must the efficacy of the profession be maintained. Peer assistance and/or review programs are designed to do just that. Peer assistance programs benefit teachers and the public by reducing the incidences of tenure cases through successful interventions or counseling out of the profession.

No one knows the difference between good teaching and poor teaching better than the best teachers themselves. Peer assistance and/or review programs allow teachers in trouble to be evaluated by people with expertise in their teaching field, to get help and to be observed over time—

State and local education authorities should stop all emergency credentialing and out-of-field teaching, starting now. And they should allow parents whose children are in the classrooms with "emergency" teachers to tranfer their children to another classroom or public school with qualified teachers.

—SANDRA FELDMAN
Where We Stand,
August 1998

instead of the widespread evaluation practice of a single observation, usually by the principal or vice principal. Peer assistance and/or review programs provide a fairer and more comprehensive review system than most traditional teacher evaluation systems currently in use in school districts. Under peer assistance and/or review, the union balances the protection of individual teachers, the protection of the profession and the public interest.

But, some have questioned whether union involvement in peer evaluation programs, where teachers make judgments of other teachers, interferes with the union's responsibility to provide duty-of-fair representation to all of its members. This issue has been grappled with by affiliates involved in peer assistance and/or review. The union is not obligated—with regard to any issue—to take every grievance filed, nor is it obliged to contest every dismissal or disciplinary action taken against a teacher. As long as unions apply consistent, reasonable and fair principles and procedures for determining whether to contest a grievance, and as long as they make an independent investigation of the grievance, it is well within their authority to reject a poorly performing teacher's request for union assistance in a termination for poor performance case. For example, the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers meets its imperative to protect individual rights and the competence of the profession by operating two parallel structures. One arm of the union participates in and governs the peer review process, another makes determinations about grievances including any that stem from the peer review process. Provided that no individual serves at the same time on both arms or that the union leadership does not arbitrarily weigh in on one side or the other, the union meets it obligation to members with regard to the duty-of-fair representation.

Recommendations

The AFT believes it is the union's responsibility to work to improve teacher quality and enhance the teaching profession. Therefore, we urge teachers and their unions to:

- work with universities to assure that preservice programs for teachers have high standards for entry and exit, require rigorous preparation in pedagogy and the academic disciplines, and have strong clinical components that involve exemplary teachers both at the field sites and on the clinical faculty of education departments;
- work with universities and preservice institutions and the organizations representing them, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, to support the development of a stronger core curriculum in teacher preparation tied to the best research knowledge about effective practice;

- work with licensing bodies and professional standards boards to require that entering teachers meet high standards that include knowledge of their discipline, knowledge of how students learn and knowledge of the liberal arts and sciences as measured by valid and reliable assessments;
- work with legislators and local school district policy makers to assure that beginning teachers are given a well-supervised induction period, that all new teachers have the opportunity to observe and be observed and mentored by highly accomplished teachers; and that only teachers who meet professional standards are awarded tenure;
- work through the collective bargaining process to develop programs that promote and assure teacher quality, such as: 1. Peer assistance programs that provide mentoring to new teachers and provide assistance to tenured teachers whose teaching has been identified as in need of improvement. 2. Internship programs that enable master teachers to assist new teachers, review their practice and recommend whether the quality of their teaching merits their being awarded tenure. 3. Peer review programs that assure that teachers who are not performing competently are identified in a fair, noncapricious manner, have the opportunity to improve their practice with intense help provided by expert peers, receive competent, fair review by peers and, if unable to meet the standards of competence, are counseled out of the profession or otherwise terminated following due-process proceedings. 4. Other methods to help assure the quality of teaching;
- negotiate contract provisions and advocate state policies that encourage teachers to seek National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification by offering financial incentives and preparation programs; and
- support state tenure statutes that provide strong due-process safeguards, with an efficient process that ensures the protection of both individual rights and high standards for the profession.

II. Questions & Answers

What is the teacher quality issue that the union seeks to address?

Today, there is much discussion about "teacher quality" and there are proposals galore on how to improve it. There are two major thrusts to the discussion on quality. One has to do with the level of professional knowledge and skills that teachers need to practice effectively and to assure that all students meet high expectations. This view posits a need to improve the quality of the entire profession by such measures as strengthening the training of teacher candidates, raising the entry-level standards, mentoring of new professionals and assuring ongoing professional development that is meaningful and effective. The second view defines the quality issue as one of "getting rid of the bad apples." This view focuses policy initiatives around the need to streamline administrative procedures for dismissing poor quality teachers and, in some instances, has led to legislative efforts to abolish tenure and make teachers "at will" employees.

This resolution seeks to address the union's role regarding both of these quality issues—strengthening teacher preparation and development and improving, where necessary, procedures for dismissing ineffective teachers. The resolution is clear that the greatest opportunity for strengthening teacher quality will result from initiatives that strengthen entry requirements and preparation, provide mentoring to new teachers, and assure ongoing, high-quality, meaningful professional development for all teachers.

Whose responsibility is it to improve teaching quality?

AFT members certainly believe that the union has a substantial responsibility for improving teacher quality. Fully 77 percent of AFT teachers surveyed say that the union and the administration have equal responsibility for maintaining good quality teaching in their school district, while just one in five teachers feels that this is mainly a duty of the administration. Furthermore, 47 percent of teachers worry more that the union will not do enough to work for professional teaching standards and good teaching, compared to just 22 percent who see a greater danger that the union will err in the direction of not doing enough to defend teachers' job rights. Indeed, when

asked to rank five possible union goals—promote high teaching standards, work for reform, negotiate good salaries/benefits, protect job security and help with grievances—teachers, by a considerable margin, selected as their top choice having a union that "stands for high-quality teaching and promotes good teaching."

What policies or programs would help to improve teaching?

When asked to volunteer changes that would help improve teaching in their district, teachers speak most frequently about teacher training and mentoring. These are their top priorities by a significant margin. Teachers also believe that administrators do not make sufficient efforts to identify poor teachers and take corrective action.

Indeed, when asked to identify what policies might be most effective for improving teacher quality, teachers by a wide margin chose "provide better assistance and support for teachers who receive poor evaluations."

Who should provide assistance and support for new or floundering teachers?

In both a poll of New York state teachers and of AFT members nationwide, respondents strongly believe it is the union's responsibility to assist new teachers and veteran teachers experiencing difficulties in the classroom.

Union polls also show that teachers support peer-review programs. A New York state poll of teachers revealed that 64 percent of the teachers believed that peer review would be desirable (and 60 percent of the public supported teacher/peer review). Similarly, in a national poll, more than 77 percent of the respondents offered a positive response to the notion of peer assistance and evaluation. When asked to volunteer advantages of peer assistance and review programs, teachers generally focus on the merits of having fellow teachers involved in the evaluation process. They believe that other teachers will be more empathetic, knowledgeable and understanding and thus will provide more accurate evaluations than those teachers currently receive from administrators.

Would peer review programs leave a union vulnerable to duty-of-fair representation claims?

No. The overall purpose of the peer-review process is to protect the entire membership, including those who participate in the program, by establishing a means to internally maintain a high quality of teaching.

With regard to the duty-of-fair representation: The union, by law, always has the right to decline to carry a member's grievance forward if there has been no violation of the member's rights under the contract or if the grievance otherwise lacks merit. But before the union makes this decision, it must investigate the merits of

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>
> —Sandra Feldman
> *Keynote Address*
> *AFT Convention,*
> *July 17, 1998*

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each particular grievance independently and reach the decision through a process that is not arbitrary or capricious. This is true whether the union declines to carry a grievance on a termination or on any other topic. Where there is a peer assistance and review program in effect, and if that program recommended terminating a teacher, the union would not be required to carry a grievance for that teacher if the union believed the case for dismissal had been established and that the member's rights under the contract have not otherwise been violated. But before making that decision, the union would have to make its own independent investigation of the case, particularly where the member claims that the peer-review process was somehow flawed or procedurally defective. In short, local unions that wish to establish a peer-review program as one means of reconciling their commitment to both the profession as a whole and their individual members can be assured there is no legal bar to doing so.

Do we need higher entry level standards for teachers?

There is a concern that many new teachers enter the profession without being prepared in their preservice programs for the challenges of teaching in the real world. While teacher training programs are improving (teachers give higher marks this year to their college training than they have in the past: 64 percent give their training an A or a B compared to 57 percent in 1989 and 49 percent in 1984), there is still room for improvement. Concern centers around strengthening the clinical program and assuring that teachers know their subject matter—a concern shared by the public. More than two-thirds of the teachers believe that would-be teachers should be required to pass an exam, and many acknowledge that these tests currently are not difficult. Indeed, one teacher in a focus group on the issue of tests remarked that the tests were not challenging and that "it would be nice if [a test] weeded some people out, but it doesn't."

What role do tenure laws play in assuring teacher quality?

Teachers generally recognize that tenure is a due-process issue and one not directly related to teacher quality. A national poll revealed that nearly half of our members see tenure as having no effect either way on the quality of teaching (39 percent) or are not sure about its effect (8 percent).

On the other hand, there is support (78 percent) among teachers for the sentiment that "swiftly getting rid of mediocre and incompetent teachers would improve the educational system." When asked whether they believe it is possible to change tenure rules and the discipline process in a way that permits poor-quality teachers to be dismissed more easily and quickly, while simultaneously protecting legitimate job security rights, teachers by a 2-to-1 margin (57 percent to 29 percent) say that it is, indeed, possible to achieve both goals.

III. Background Information

Nineteen hundred and ninety-nine is clearly the year of the teacher. A confluence of forces calls for high student achievement for all children, demands for accountability of educational institutions and stakeholders, new federal legislation, the recommendations of a prestigious commission and new research findings have all served to focus the public's attention on teachers and the quality of instruction.

The AFT has long promoted quality in the teaching profession and what follows is taken from AFT president Sandra Feldman's keynote address to AFT's 1998 convention, describing the necessary steps for raising teaching quality.

A Teacher Quality Manifesto

The latest issue to be caught up in political agendas is teacher quality. I'll start with teacher incompetence and the tenure issue—not because it's the greatest problem in teacher quality; it is not. But even one incompetent teacher is too much for the children she teaches, the parents she faces, the members who get her students in subsequent grades—and, frankly, for the good of our union.

So let me state unequivocally: We believe all students have the right to a high-quality teacher, a teacher who both knows her subject matter and how to teach it, who both cares about children and knows how they learn. And we believe that the union has a responsibility to help ensure that the members of our profession meet high standards.

But the idea that ending tenure—eliminating due process for teachers—is the way to ensure a quality teaching force is ludicrous.

Teachers are entitled to fair dismissal procedures—to protection from arbitrary, capricious, and unreasonable dismissals. Moreover, children and the public also need to be protected from schemes to replace competent, experienced teachers

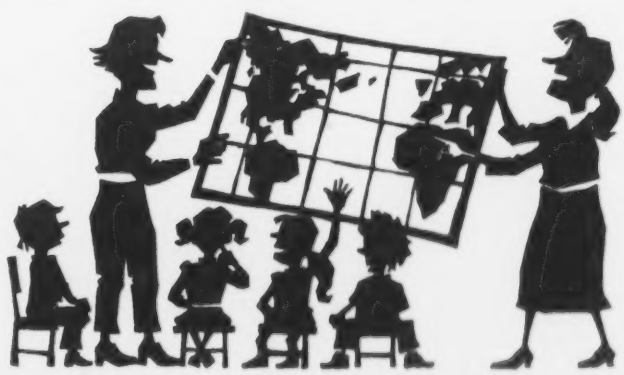
with unqualified but cheaper labor.

The fact is, this nation doesn't have to choose between teacher quality or the individual rights of teachers, which also protects teacher quality. We need to do both. We can do both.

So let me propose a partnership on behalf of teacher quality. Because we can't do it alone—and political and school officials have certainly demonstrated they can't do it.

First, instead of capitalizing on dismissal proceedings that are time-consuming, costly, inefficient, and more adversarial than professional, let's streamline them and professionalize them, as we've already done in a number of states and districts. Let's use these model laws and contracts.

Second, instead of blaming seniority rules for all the ills of the world and proposing to give principals sole discretion over hiring, let's treat teachers as professionals and involve them in the hiring process. Instead of trying to end rules established to protect against arbitrary and capricious decisions, let's make sure that a teacher's qualifications and demonstrated fit with a school's educational philosophy or program are what count. We have such schools. We have contract language that achieves this goal.



Third, instead of capitalizing on lousy, top-down teacher evaluation systems that make it too easy to get tenured, that are indifferent about teachers who are falling down on the job and offer no assistance to teachers who need help, let's negotiate a peer-review and intervention program. Because believe me, no one is more knowledgeable and rigorous about teacher performance than first-rate teachers!

We pioneered peer review and intervention. Many of our locals are doing it. It works, not only in our eyes but according to the experts on teacher evaluation. Yet negotiation is a two-way street. We can't ram even the most effective programs down management's throat; believe me, we've tried. Let's negotiate.

Fourth, instead of allowing new teachers to sink or swim, let's set up teacher internship programs. They work. Yes, they cost money. But those costs are nothing compared to the cost of the talent we lose in the first, difficult year of teaching because no one is there to help. Those costs are nothing compared to the education that's lost to children when the new, struggling teachers they happen to have are sinkers rather than swimmers.

Fifth, let's make schools learning communities for teachers, as well as for students. Provide for master teachers, teacher centers, real professional development in the schools—with time for teachers to work with one another to overcome children's learning problems as they come up.

My last point is really the first. Because our teacher quality problem is far more of a future problem than a current one. Our teaching force is "maturing." We are on our way to replacing two million teachers. Who will these new teachers be?

We've seen progress on more rigorous licensing standards. Now we also have advanced certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Those high standards are beginning to be reflected in teacher education and licensing requirements, including testing for new teachers. Teacher quality is on everyone's mind, as well it should be.

But so long as state and local education authorities continue to issue emergency credentials and to misassign teachers into subjects they are not qualified to teach, higher standards will be a fiction.

So let me issue my final challenge for a partnership on behalf of teacher quality: Instead of blaming teacher unions for policies we didn't create and don't defend; instead of blaming us for mistakes we didn't make and don't defend in hiring, promotion, or tenure, end emergency credentials and the misassignment of teachers now! Let us end politics as usual as we face preparing and hiring two million new teachers.

You know, there are people who want to do away with standards for teachers altogether, who mock the need for teacher education and for licensing requirements, who consider certification a desire on our part for bureaucratic control—nutty as that may be. They like to tell us that teaching standards are keeping brilliant historians out of our schools, or retirees from the military and aerospace industry, or Warren Buffett, or—my personal favorite—Albert Einstein.

By the way, I don't see any of the folks who say this lining up to teach in our public schools.

Well, Albert Einstein just happened to be a proud and active AFT member. And he would have been the first to tell us that, when it comes to teaching children, it's simply not enough just to know your subject matter well; you also have to know how to teach it to children. It's not either/or; the two go hand in hand.

Einstein also would have pointed out—not just because he was a good union member, but because he also had common sense—that if you want qualified math or science or other teachers in our schools, you'll need to pay them.

Isn't it curious that those who love to talk about markets and about competition never talk about a competitive salary, a fair market price for teachers?

Now, the AFT is on record in support

Instead of blaming teacher unions for policies we didn't create and don't defend, instead of blaming us for mistakes we didn't make and don't defend in hiring, promotion, or tenure, end emergency credentials and the misassignment of teachers now!

of good alternative certification programs. We also want to see standards in the traditional route raised. We like to see retired military folks in our schools; in fact, we proposed such a program to Congress, and it's in effect. We like to see poets and artists in our schools. And we welcome scientists and mathematicians now working elsewhere into our classrooms.

But they, just like other teachers, ought to demonstrate that they know their subject matter. They, even more than new teachers—who at least have had student-teaching experience—ought to be under the supervision of expert teachers during their first year of teaching. And, if they decide to make teaching their career, they, just like other teachers, should demonstrate that they know how to teach—not for our sake, but for the sake of their students.

But really, isn't all this talk about John Hope Franklin or Warren Buffett or Albert Einstein being kept out of our schools because of teaching standards just a red herring?

Let's face it, every profession and trade has licensing requirements, from doctor, lawyer, architect, or accountant to plumber and cosmetologist. Don't our kids deserve standards, too, for the people who serve them? Doesn't the public's interest in education need to be protected just as much as the public's interest in health or in the buildings and bridges that don't fall down?

Isn't the real story, the one no one wants to talk about, a story about how, in districts where attracting teachers has become a chronic problem, alternative certification doesn't get us many geniuses or poets or even a modest number of Teach for America kids?

The truth is, in places that have the toughest conditions and pay the least—translation: the schools serving our poorest, neediest children—teaching standards aren't the problem. The problem is the chronic undermining of those standards through "emergency" credentials and misassignment of teachers to classes they aren't trained to teach. That's our teacher quality problem!

Let's face it. Emergency licenses and teacher misassignment have created a structural teacher quality deficit in this country. And this ought to be taken as seriously as the budget deficit has been.

And the elimination or lowering of standards for entry into the profession in any school, including charter schools or voucher schools, can only make it worse.

So let me repeat my challenge to state and local education authorities: If you're really serious about teacher quality, stop undercutting even the standards we have now. Stop creating and perpetuating a structural teacher quality deficit into the next century. This school year, put an end to emergency credentials and the misassignment of teachers.

This is not a proposal lightly made. Because if it is implemented, we would have a crisis in many schools. I should say,

a more visible, more difficult-to-deal-with crisis than we have at present. Because we would have many classrooms throughout some of our cities that go not only without teachers, but without babysitters. And the structural teacher quality deficit would be shamefully exposed.

But we cannot allow this problem to continue and we cannot allow state and local education authorities, and others, to get off the hook with talk about how they can't precipitate a crisis. As I said, this already is a crisis, especially for our neediest children.

So, to avoid any excuses—and because it's the right thing for us to do—I also call on our affiliates and on our members to help get through such a crisis by negotiating ways to accommodate the additional shortages until qualified teachers are found. Here are some examples of solutions that can be negotiated:

One, offer incentives to experienced teachers seeking to retire so they will stay longer.

Two, offer flexible scheduling and part-time teaching to retirees or teachers who are presently on child-care leave.

Three, offer incentives for teachers to become certified in an additional field, such as a shortage field.

Four, make sure that the liberal arts graduates, the retirees or career-switchers from other fields, and others willing to teach—the historians and Einsteins—take and pass entry-level exams that regular teachers are required to pass. And then provide them with training before they practice on kids. We can help.

Five, have them, and all new teachers, be mentored by master teachers. Many of our contracts already include such programs.

Six, ask qualified teachers now working in shortage areas to voluntarily take on additional classes—with appropriate additional pay, of course. And give teachers the autonomy and flexibility to arrange classes of different sizes among themselves. Many contracts already provide for this.

Seven, recruit paraprofessionals with college credits and offer more support for them to obtain teaching credentials.

Eight, put qualified supervisors and administrators into the classroom.

Nine, allow the parents of children in classrooms without qualified teachers to transfer their children to another classroom or public school in the district that has enough qualified teachers.

Ten, find a way, in this upturned economy, to raise teachers' salaries, particularly where they are lowest, to put the profession where it belongs in a hierarchy of values—to show that education matters, that children matter in America.

Let us stop the forays and skirmishes over demonstrably ineffective and conflict-producing measures, like meaningless recertification or threatening teacher due process rights, or seeking union-free environments or vouchers for a few.

Let us provide what the millions upon millions of children need and deserve in America—free and equal access to high-quality public education.

This is my challenge to those who run public education—the state and local officials, the boards of education, the superintendents—and to our own local and state unions: Measure every school by the highest standard: Would I want my own child to be there?

And, in addition to all the other school improvement efforts we are making and working on together—high standards, good discipline, programs that work—together. Let's take this basic step: Enforce high entry standards into the teaching profession, so that as we face the next century, the children of America—no matter their parents' wealth, no matter the wealth or status of their neighborhood—have truly equal access to this essential element of a good education: well-educated, qualified teachers in their classrooms.

IV. Background Reading

General Materials

Archer, Jeff. "States Anteing Up Supplements to Teachers Certified by Board." *Education Week*. 11/18/98.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. "The Evolution of Peer Coaching." *Educational Leadership*. March 1996.

Cohen, David K. and Hill, Heather C. "State Policy and Classroom Performance: Mathematics Reform in California," *CPRE Policy Briefs*. January 1998.

Cohen, David K., McLaughlin, Milbrey W., and Talbert, Joan E. *Teaching for Understanding*. Jossey-Bass, 1993.

Darling-Hammond, Linda. *Teaching as a Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice*. 1998.

Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching. Prepared for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. November 1997.

Elmore, Richard F. and Burney, Deanna. *Investing in Teacher Learning*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. 1997.

Hoffman, Nancy E. *et al.*, eds. *Lessons from Restructuring Experiences: Stories of Change in Professional Development Schools*. SUNY Series, Restructuring and School Change. July 1997.

Kochendorfer, Leonard. *Becoming a Reflective Teacher*. National Education Association. August 1994.

Reinhartz, Judy, ed. *Teacher Induction*. 1989.

Stigler, James W. and Hiebert, James. *The Teaching Gap.* Free Press. 1999.

What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future. Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. September 1996.

AFT Materials

Bridging the Gap from Research to Practice: ER&D— A Professional Development Program (Video)

This video offers an introduction to the Educational Research & Dissemination (ER&D) Program. Developed by the American Federation of Teachers in 1981 in collaboration with researchers and practitioners, ER&D is a professional development program through which the AFT trains local affiliate coordinators to return to the local and train members in research-based instructional strategies. It offers 12 courses and a variety of dissemination approaches to ensure that the program fits the needs and resources of AFT affiliates. In this brief video, local, state, and national leaders relate some of their experiences with ER&D programs, and researchers describe their collaboration with national staff and affiliates. *$10 each. (April 1999)*

Effective Classroom Management (Video)

As part of its campaign to raise academic achievement and improve student conduct, the AFT prepared this 18-minute video to assist teachers and paraprofessionals in becoming effective classroom managers. The video and accompanying study guide, derived from materials developed by the AFT's Educational Research and Dissemination (ER&D) program, cover the basics of establishing an orderly learning environment. *$10 each.(1995)*

AFT Educational Issues Policy Briefs

Short, comprehensive overviews of a number of pressing educational issues. These briefs are produced throughout the year. Teacher quality briefs currently available:

- Mentor Teacher Programs in the States; *13 pages (Sept. 1998)*
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: Legislative Update; *8 pages (Sept. 1998)*
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: Local Action Update (includes sample contract language and local union activities supporting National Board certification); *10 pages (Nov. 1998)*
- Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants; *6 pages (Feb. 1999)*

Single copy free. Also available on the Internet: http://www.aft.org/edissues/policybriefs.

Principles for Professional Development

To help its affiliates review, evaluate, improve, and design professional development programs, the AFT has prepared a set of guidelines for professional development. Among the central themes the guidelines highlight are the need for professional development that helps teachers gain deep knowledge of the subjects they teach; that reflects current research on teaching and learning; that leads teachers to be intellectually engaged with their colleagues; and that provides teachers sufficient time, support and resources to master new content and pedagogy. *9 pages. Item no. 176. Single copy $2; $1 each for five or more. Also available on the Internet: http://www.aft.org/edissues/teacherquality/prodev1.htm (1997)*

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: What? Why? How?

Striving for excellence in your profession? You may want to pursue National Board certification. This voluntary assessment of classroom practice was developed by teachers, for teachers, to recognize outstanding educators who can meet the Board's rigorous standards. This booklet answers questions about certification, including information about NBPTS standards, what the assessment entails, eligibility requirements, and where to obtain applications. In addition, it discusses some of the incentive and reward programs that have developed around National Board certification. *20 pages. Item no. 179. Single copy $2; 50 cents each for 10 or more, with further discounts available to affiliates ordering in bulk. (May 1998)*

National Board Certification: A Guide for Candidates

This guide—produced jointly by the AFT and NEA—capitalizes on the experiences of National Board Certified Teachers and others engaged in candidate support, sharing practical advice about how to approach the National Board's assessments and how to increase the prospect of successfully completing them. *60 pages. Item no. 182. $5 each; $3 each for five or more. Also available on the Internet: http://www.aft.org/edissues/nbcg.htm (1998)*

Peer Assistance and Peer Review: An AFT/NEA Handbook

Prepared for the AFT/NEA joint conference on teacher quality, this handbook is designed to assist affiliates interested in developing peer assistance and/or peer review programs in their local sites. Highlights include: how to develop support for the program; features that must be addressed in developing a program; and contract language to assist affiliates as they negotiate to develop such programs. *21 pages plus appendices. $5 each; $3 each for five or more. Also available on the Internet: http://www.aft.org/edissues (1998)*

Shaping the Profession that Shapes the Future: Speeches from the AFT/NEA Conference on Teacher Quality

In the fall of 1998, teams of teachers, administrators, and other educators gathered in Washington, D.C., for an unprecedented event. For three days, they set aside any differences and, together, took a hard look at one of the most important issues facing our schools today: teacher quality. This booklet includes keynote addresses from Sandra Feldman, AFT president; Bob Chase, NEA president; U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley; Julia E. Koppich and Charles Taylor Kerchner, authors, *United Mind Workers: Unions and Teaching in the Knowledge Society*; Anthony Alvarado, chief academic officer, San Diego school district; William H. Schmidt, professor of education, Michigan

State University and TIMSS National Research Coordinator; and Linda Darling-Hammond, executive director of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future. *78 pages. Item no. 184. $3 each. (June 1999)*

Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do

Thanks to new scientific research—plus a long-awaited scientific and political consensus around reading research—the knowledge exists to teach all but a handful of severely disabled children to read well. This report discusses the current state of teacher preparation in reading. It reviews the reading research and describes the knowledge base that is essential for teacher candidates and practicing teachers to master if they are to be successful in teaching all children to read well. Finally, the report makes recommendations for improving the system of teacher education and professional development. *32 pages. Item no. 372. $3 each. (June 1999)*

Creating a Classroom Team

This brochure contains tips and ideas for helping paraprofessionals and teachers work together successfully. *Item no. 152. Single copy 25 cents; $20 for 100. (Sept. 1994)*

Standards for a Profession

For use by local and state affiliates that are working to set standards for the employment and training of instructional paraprofessionals. This two-part report includes 1) strategies and resources for pursuing state legislation and district-level programs; and 2) recommendations of a national committee of AFT paraprofessionals and teacher leaders on the skills and training necessary for paraprofessionals. *34 pages; Item no. 164A. $1.50 each.* The recommendations document is also available separately from the complete package. *21 pages. Item no. 164B. 40 cents each; $30 for 100. (1998)*

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